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EDITORIAL COMMENT

THE PUBLIC AND NURSING AFFAIRS

We believe one reason why it is so difficult to secure higher standards for nurses in the way of legislation, improvements in teaching, etc., is that the public is so ignorant of our affairs. We are putting the cart before the horse when we wait until some crucial moment arrives before trying to secure its coöperation. We need to learn the lesson which the medical profession has recently had impressed upon it, that of sharing our knowledge with the public rather than shutting ourselves away from it and trying to work out our salvation alone.

In a paper read at the American Nurses' Association, and published in the September JOURNAL, Miss Armour made clear that the attitude of nurses toward their work and the way in which they do their work influences those outside our ranks and either attracts or repels them. She was speaking of attracting young women to enter our profession, but the same truth applies in other directions. If our work really inspires us, if we love and respect it, others will catch the spirit and will be ready to work with us to help solve some of the problems which we cannot meet so well alone.

We might begin our efforts with those nearest at hand, the boards of managers of our training schools, who often know nothing at first hand of our work and our perplexities. It is not enough that the superintendent of nurses should be present at their conferences, it is very desirable that some member of the alumnae association of the school should be made a member of such a board, a woman who would be able to throw fresh light on their discussions and present a fresh point of view. It is very possible, too, that she would in turn receive enlightenment and perhaps gain new knowledge which she could pass on to the association which she represents.

Another way of bringing our affairs home to the board members is to invite them to become subscribers to our nursing magazines. This might often be brought about by a suggestion to that effect from the superintendent if she realized its value. They would then see the local problem in the light of the need of the whole profession and not as an isolated difficulty.

Then, too, members of boards might be occasionally invited to attend meetings of the alumnae association or of the local league of nursing education. Some special meeting might be provided for with a topic of interest to all, and the board members might be invited to assist in the discussion or to write some of the papers. Whenever state or national meetings are held in a city, great pains should be taken to invite both training school and hospital trustees to the open sessions.

A writer in the letter department of this JOURNAL makes the suggestion that we should bring some of our problems before women's clubs, men's church clubs, village improvement societies and other public-spirited bodies. Doubtless what would help the situation in one place might harm it in another, but in general it is true that we should receive more intelligent coöperation when we especially need it if there has been a previous exchange of opinions and knowledge.

Take the question which is now being so interestingly discussed in our letter department, that of special nursing in hospitals. Many of us have for years accepted those conditions, deploring them, perhaps, but adopting the view of one contributor who thinks the younger nurse should simply take other work if she does not like the conditions attendant on hospital nursing. Reforms will never come by waiting for them, they have to be helped along. In some hospitals where the superintendent has been unable to bring about anything better for her special nurses, it would be a great help to her to have a committee appointed from the alumnae of city or county association to present the matter to the hospital trustees. The members of the committee should be wise, well-balanced, courteous but resolute women, not expecting the impossible, but with definite ideas of what is wrong and of what improvements might be made. Such a committee would often command more attention than would be given to the superintendent acting alone, and if it has her support and good will, reforms are almost sure to follow. Why not try it?

CHURCH ATTENDANCE

At this time of the year our training schools are changing their forces. The seniors who have graduated drop out, one by one, as the time of each expires, but the entering class comes in in a body, as a rule,

it having become the custom to admit students only once a year, or twice, rather than singly, as used to be the case. Some of these entering pupils are mature women, who have been self-supporting, but who have now chosen a new line of work. The majority, however, are young, fresh from home or school, perhaps away from home influences for the first time, and to such we wish to make the suggestion that they should not let go of the faith in which they were reared.

The absorbing life of the pupil nurse leaves so little time for her own pursuits that it is easy for her to give up church attendance which, more than anything else, will keep her in touch with the spiritual side of life and fortify her for the revelations which come to her day by day in her work, revelations of human depravity and human nobility, of hard hearts in people of high position or of tender ones hidden by ragged garments. Catholic and Episcopal hospitals provide chapels and religious services for patients, doctors and nurses, so that in these the latter are not so apt to break away from their old ties, but in most other training schools church attendance is rather hard to arrange and is quickly neglected. A nurse who is off duty on Sunday morning must leave church a little early in order to reach her room and put on her uniform before dinner. One who is off duty in the afternoon may wish to go to bed early, to be ready for the next day's tasks. In most cases a nurse finds herself in a new city, in a new church, with no one to notice or care whether she attends service, and with no way of knowing either minister or people when she does go, for she is not free to enter any of the church activities.

We believe superintendents of nurses would be doing a great service to their new pupils if they would find out, as they enter the school, what church they would naturally attend and take pains to show them the way to that church, perhaps sending some one with them the first time to introduce them to the minister. We wish that ministers, everywhere would seek out the nurses in the training schools nearest them.

We do not think, by any means, that church attendance constitutes the larger part of right living, or even the most essential part, but we do believe that it helps us to pause once a week and consider the deeper part of our nature which so influences the character of our work.

PAPERS FOR CONVENTIONS

Very often the programme committee of a state or national association plans a symposium of papers on some one important subject, giving a different phase of it to each speaker or writer, so as to get a

well-rounded whole. The plans of the committee are sometimes frustrated by the excess zeal of each writer who is so anxious to do the subject justice that she begins with the foundation of modern nursing and traces the development of her topic down to the present time, going through much painstaking research in order to get reliable statistics to present. This makes the reading of such papers less interesting, as speaker after speaker covers the same ground in almost the same way, and the hearers lose, through weariness, the points which should have been emphasized.

In accepting a place on a programme a nurse should find out definitely just what sort of a paper she is to give and just how much time she is to occupy. She should then stick closely to her subject and keep within her time limit, writing on the exact topic she has been asked to present and on no other. She should give as much definite information as possible on that topic and then stop. The resulting paper will be shorter and not so profound, but it will be far more interesting and better appreciated by an audience which may have been already lulled to sleep and which needs rousing. As a rule, twenty minutes is long enough for any speaker or for any subject, and to go on beyond half an hour is an imposition and is due to the speaker's own intense interest in her subject, not to a burning desire for more on the part of her hearers. It is far better to leave people wishing you would go on than to have them heave a sigh of relief when you close.

MINIATURE HEALTH OFFICERS

The Committee on Janitor Service of the Department of Science Instruction of the National Education Association made some recommendations at the convention held in July which will be of special interest to school nurses. It was decided that in order to standardize janitor service it was necessary to have facts; that each school had conditions peculiar to itself, and that the facts for that school could best be obtained through the coöperation of the children. The suggestions are:

1. Appoint a group of health officers from the pupils in each room, for terms of such length that each child may serve once during the year.

2. Have a health officer read the thermometer hourly, making records in a book or on the blackboard where one week's record may be compared with another. Where it is possible, have a health officer adjust the heating or ventilating facilities to meet the conditions found.

3. Measure dustiness by making cultures, or by going over smooth surfaces with a cloth to see how much dust has been left. A health officer should make note of any sweeping or dusting done during school hours, which should not be allowed.

4. A health officer above the age of eleven should be taught to gauge the relative humidity of the school room and to use the special thermometer arranged for that purpose.

5. A health officer may learn to measure air currents by the use of the anemometer, or to test them with a candle or joss stick, or to compare the freshness of indoor with outdoor air by the sense of smell.

6. The cleanliness of bowls, closets, etc., should be reported once each session.

SEPTEMBER JOURNALS

With the change of publisher which has recently taken place, and which has been explained in the two previous issues of the JOURNAL, there was a mistake in the printing of the September number which delayed the mailing of part of the edition and which held back the copies due subscribers in a number of states. All September copies should have been received by early October, and if any are still missing, they will be sent subscribers, provided their addresses in our files are found to be correct. Requests for these should be sent to the editorial office at Rochester.

We want to again emphasize the fact that subscriptions should now be sent to the editorial office, instead of to the publishers, as was formerly the custom, that they should be addressed to 45 South Union Street, Rochester, N. Y., and that money in whatever form—check, money order, or express order should be made payable to the American Journal of Nursing, not to any one member of the editorial staff nor to the publishers. Checks sent to the publishers have to be forwarded to Rochester, and are not only delayed, but there is one more chance for error than if they took the direct route.

The change has caused unavoidable confusion, but order is being gradually restored under the new conditions and we hope by another month to give a prompt and reliable service to our readers.